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TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Woman accuses skincare store of fraud, intimidation

By MARY SCHLEY

ANOTHER VISITOR filed a complaint last week against an Ocean Avenue skincare store claiming she was trapped in the shop, coerced into buying something she didn't want — and then ended up with an empty box.

Samantha Russell notified police, city officials and the chamber of commerce of her experience at Body Frenzy after reading an Oct. 13 Pine Cone story about a woman who settled a claim against a similar business after she was talked into buying \$1,625 worth of skincare products, only to find she had in fact received an empty box. Employees had refused to return her money, saying they had a no-refund policy, but after a mediation session at Small Claims Court, the owners agreed to write her a check.

"I desire to alert you to a terrible fraudulent criminal activity I have encountered in your business district at a store on Ocean Avenue called Body Frenzy," Russell said in her Oct. 23 email. "I urge you to take action! Please shut this business down!"

A frequent visitor to town, Russell said she was walking along Ocean Avenue on Oct. 18 when she was "lured" into the store "by a guy who was handing out free samples on the sidewalk." (Doing business on the sidewalk violates city codes, and employees at the three skincare stores on Ocean Avenue have been repeatedly warned against it. Citations have also been issued in some cases.)

"Once inside, this same large male salesperson stood in the doorway, blocking my exit," she continued, while a second salesman, "who called himself 'Samuel' and claimed to be French (I speak French and could tell he was lying), was extremely energetically and verbally manipulative, coercive and foreboding."

She said he kept motioning to the other man to not let anyone else inside while he was giving his sales pitch.

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McGuire denies felony bad check charge

By MARY SCHLEY

FORMER PEBBLE Beach resident Donna McGuire, who has been accused of unethical and unlawful business dealings, and has filed for bankruptcy multiple times, pleaded not guilty to felony bad-check writing in a Salinas courtroom Thursday afternoon. A preliminary hearing in the case is set for early December.

McGuire, who in July pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of false advertising and is on probation as a result, is now being prosecuted for writing numerous bad checks in late 2015 and early 2016 while supposedly trying to buy a business, the Monterey Party Bus.

A complaint signed by Monterey County Deputy District Attorney Todd Hornik Oct. 12 charges

McGuire, 47, with violating a state law against writing multiple non-sufficient-fund checks.

See **McGUIRE** page 22A

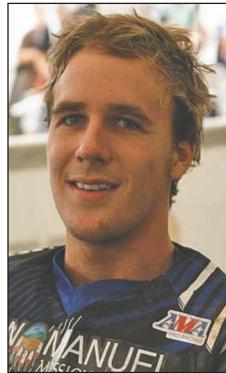


Donna McGuire

Identity thief arrested for looting after fires

By MARY SCHLEY

WHEN SEAN Kranyak's truck was broken into while he and his wife were enjoying the sunset at Garrapata Beach in late September, he endured the headache of replacing his credit cards and IDs and moved on. But the headaches



The real Sean Kranyak (above) and the fake one (right) in the back of a Santa Rosa cop car.



returned with a vengeance after the man who stole his wallet — and his identity — that evening was arrested Saturday night for looting in the wake of the Wine Country fires.

"I figured I was in the clear — I had new IDs and was just going on about my life," said Kranyak, who lives off of Rio Road with his wife, Lauren. "And Sunday morning, I woke up to a text from a work acquaintance up north."

Addressed to him and his father, the message asked if the man arrested by Santa Rosa P.D. for looting, leading police on a chase, stealing a truck, and numerous other felonies was indeed Kranyak, as had been reported by law enforcement and the media.

Kranyak quickly Googled his name and found numerous reports of his alleged crimes. "A man and woman were arrested Saturday evening on suspicion of looting in a burned neighborhood of Santa Rosa, according to police," read a story posted by a Northern California NBC station. "Sean Kranyak, 29, of Monterey, and Christina Marsh, 22, of Marina, were arrested on multiple felony charges, including looting, reckless evading, possession of a stolen vehicle and possession of stolen property,

See **THIEF** page 21A

CITY LOWERS BOOM ON BANK SIGNS, GALLERY AWNING

By MARY SCHLEY

BANKS ARE used to having their every financial move scrutinized by federal and state officials — but in Carmel, the planning commission is also keeping a watchful eye out, when it comes to signs. Last month, commissioners criticized Wells Fargo's proposal to install new signs at its San Carlos Street branch, saying they would be too bright, too large and too numerous to meet city standards.

The company proposed replacing the black metal lettering on the side of the building with yellow and red letters, installing a new wood sign at the driveway that would have yellow lettering on a red background and a depiction of the iconic stagecoach, and replacing nine parking and directional signs in the lot with aluminum ones.

But assistant planner Catherine Tarone said the plans don't comply with several Carmel Municipal Code requirements and guidelines for signs. Specifically, a business is generally only supposed to have one sign, and it can be no

larger than 6 square feet if it's mounted on a wall or on posts in the ground. Signs are supposed to be made of natural materials like wood, wrought iron, ceramic or stone, and in muted colors.

"The Wells Fargo building is a mid-century modern style and was constructed in 1945," Tarone said in her report. "In staff's opinion, the proposed signage is not 'compatible in design, color, size and scale to the business storefront, adjoining structures and surroundings,'" as required by the municipal code.

Tarone also mentioned she couldn't find any record of the city approving the existing signs, which are also too large and too numerous.

Name, font change

Representing Wells Fargo, Charley Schalliol of Site Enhancement Services said the company wanted to update the signs to match its current logo, colors and name.

"The main reason we're looking for modification is there's been a brand change with the font for Wells Fargo," he said. "There's a serif in the 'r' that needs to be modified, and the word, 'Bank,' needs to be removed."

The brighter colors would make the wall sign more visible on a dark building that's well shielded by trees and plants, he said. It would also be smaller than the existing wall-mounted sign, down from 11 square feet to 7.9 square feet, because even though the letters would be taller, at 11 inches as opposed to 9 inches, there would be fewer of them.

"We're just looking for a little bit of contrast in that light tannish brownish building," he said, adding that the overall

See **BOOM** page 14A

Sinking, cracks force ice skating cancellation

■ Race beer tent to be moved, too

By KELLY NIX

THE POPULAR ice skating rink at Monterey's Custom House Plaza that was set to open in about two weeks has been called off for the season because of cracking and sinking of the historic square.

The cancellation of the seasonal ice rink — which had been scheduled to be open on Nov. 20 and run until Jan. 7, 2018 — was announced Monday in a Facebook post by Ice Skating by the Bay, which puts on the annual event.

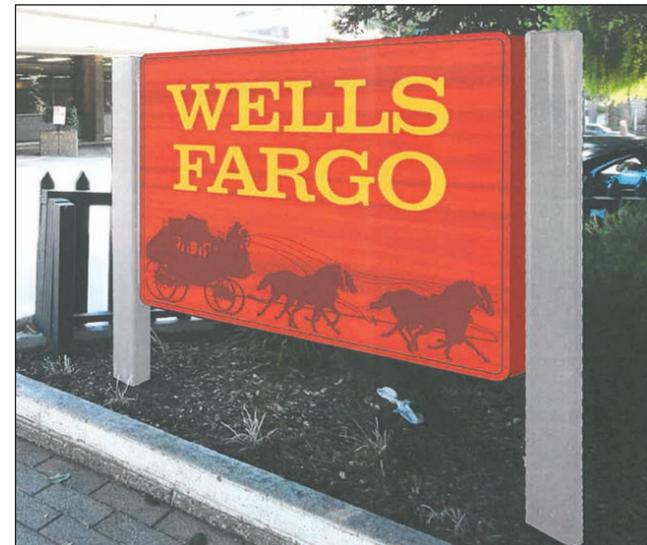
"Well, folks, the issue with the cracks and sinking of the bricks in the plaza has yet to be resolved, and we are not certain when that may happen," the Facebook post said. "Unfortunately and regrettably, we must inform everyone that Ice Skating by the Bay will be going on hiatus for this holiday season."

Much of the plaza was cordoned off on Oct. 15 upon the discovery of long cracks in the bricks and that areas of the courtyard were sinking. California State Parks owns the Custom House Plaza.

After the significant fractures were found, City of Monterey and state parks officials said they were going to test the foundation to determine the cause of the cracks and sinking, and ways to fix it.

Ice Skating by the Bay's portable ice skating center is

See **ICE** page 22A



It's too red and too yellow, and at 21 square feet, it's also too big. The planning commission told Wells Fargo to ditch plans for this proposed sign, and others.